

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BRUSSE 02693 182031Z
ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00
INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9362
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BONN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE
US MISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 1472

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 2693

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PINS CG BE
SUBJECT: BELGIANS ECHO U.S. ENDORSEMENT OF MOBUTU DIPLOMATIC
INITIATIVE

REF: STATE 60205

SUMMARY: BELGIAN GOVERNMENT AGREES WITH U.S. RESPONSE TO
ZAIRE ON ITS PROPOSED DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVE WITH EMPHASIS ON
SEEKING A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE SHABA SITUATION IN AN
AFRICAN CONTEXT. BELGIAN GOVERNMENT REGARDS THE SHABA
INCURSION AS A SERIOUS POLITICAL THREAT TO THE MOBUTU
GOVERNMENT BUT REMAINS STILL UNCERTAIN ABOUT THE ACTUAL
SITUATION ON THE GROUND AND THE OBJECTIVES OF THE INVADERS.
END SUMMARY.

1. WE CALLED ON MFA DIRECTOR-GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS
(VANDEN BLOOCK) TODAY TO CONVEY THE NATURE OF OUR RESPONSE
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PAGE 02 BRUSSE 02693 182031Z

TO THE GOZ PLAN FOR DIPLOMATIC ACTION (REFTEL). VANDEN
BLOOCK SAID THAT AN INSTRUCTION HAD GONE OUT TO HIS
AMBASSADOR IN KINSHASA TODAY WHICH FOLLOWED QUITE CLOSELY
THE LINES OF THE U.S. RESPONSE. HE SAID THE BELGIAN
EMPHASES WERE ON THE DESIRABILITY OF SEEKING A POLITICAL
SOLUTION TO THE SHABA SITUATION IN AN AFRICAN CONTEXT.
HE SAID BRUSSELS HAS SERIOUS DOUBTS THAT ZAIRE WOULD

COME UP A WINNER IF THE ISSUE WERE TAKEN TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES.

2. IN THAT CONNECTION HE REPORTED THAT THE BELGIAN AND FRENCH CHARGES IN LUANADA HAD BEEN CALLED IN BY THE ANGOLA MFA YESTERDAY TO RECEIVE A WARNING AGAINST PROVIDING MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO THE GOZ. THE THRUST OF THE ANGOLA DEMARCHE WAS THAT MOBUTU WAS TRYING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF LOCAL INTERNAL DISSIDENCE IN SHABA TO OBTAIN THE MEANS TO CARRY OUT OFFENSIVE ACTIONS AGAINST ANGOLA, HE SAID. THE ANGOLAN DEMARCHE CARRIED A WARNING THAT, IF BELGIUM (AND FRANCE) IN EFFECT UNDERWROTE MOBUTU'S PLANNED AGGRESSIVE ACTS, THEY WOULD EARN INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNATION.

3. VANDEN BLOOCK SAID THAT THE ANGOLAN CLAIM OF IMPENDING ZAIRIAN ATTACK WAS HOGWASH, OF COURSE, BUT ONE COULD NOT IGNORE THE ANGOLA DEMARCHE. LUANDA COULD BE LAYING THE BASIS FOR AN AGGRESSION COMPLAINT AGAINST ZAIRE, HE SAID, PERHAPS TO COVER ITS SHABA OPERATION. THIS SIMPLY POINTED UP THE HAZARDS OF ZAIRE VENTURING AT THIS POINT INTO THE U.N. ARENA, HE CONCLUDED.

4. WITH RESPECT TO OUR QUESTION WHETHER BELGIUM WOULD EMULATE OUR READINESS TO SPEAK TO WALDHEIM IN SUPPORT OF ZAIRE, VANDEN BLOOCK SAID HE WOULD NOT RULE IT OUT. BUT THAT WAS A BIT FOR DOWN THE TRACK FOR HIM TO SAY SO FLATLY NOW.

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PAGE 03 BRUSSE 02693 182031Z

5. REGARDING THE DEPARTMENT'S REQUEST (PARA 5 REFTEL) TO OBTAIN GOZ'S MOST AUTHORITATIVE EVALUATION OF THE SITUATION IN ZAIRE, WE CAREFULLY CANVASSED THOSE IN GOB CLOSEST TO THE SITUATION. THE CHARGE, CALLING ON PRIME MINISTER TINDEMANS ON OTHER BUSINESS TODAY, TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO GET TINDEMANS' APPRAISAL. THERE IS A CONTINUING REVIEW OF THE SITUATION (A HIGH-LEVEL INTER-MINISTERIAL MEETING IS TAKING PLACE TONIGHT FOR EXAMPLE). THE FOLLOWING IS WHAT APPEARS TO BE A CONSENSUS APPRAISAL AS OF TODAY.

6. TINDEMANS TOLD THE CHARGE THAT THE GOB DID NOT REALLY KNOW WHAT WAS TAKING PLACE ON THE GROUND IN SHABA, HENCE IT COULD NOT COME TO ANY HARD ESSAY OF THE SITUATION. SPEAKING IN A BROAD SENSE, HE SAID THE SITUATION WAS "SERIOUS", THAT IS, THE GOZ WAS CONFRONTED WITH AT LEAST A POLITICAL THREAT OF REAL ANGER. TINDEMANS SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD APPROACH THE SITUATION CAUTIOUSLY. DELIVERY OF ADDITIONAL ARMS WAS NOT ENVISAGED.

BELGIANS DO NOT WANT TO GET DEEPLY INVOLVED IN THE CURRENT DISPUTE.

7. THE FOREIGN MINISTRY APPRIASAL IS CONSISTENT WITH TINDEMANS'. AS TO THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND, GOB HAS NO FIRST-HAND INFORMATION THAT FIGHTING HAS TAKEN PLACE IN SHABA. IT DOES NOT EXCLUDE SOME SKIRMISHING, BUT THE INVADERS' PROGRESS APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN ESSENTIALLY DOWN EMPTY ROADS. THIS MAY BE THE DELIBERATE INTENT OF ZAIRIAN MILITARY AUTHORITIEES, AND THIS COULD MAKE SENSE SINCE THE INVADERS' LINE OF COMMUNICATIONS IS STRETCHING AND REALLY CRITICAL OBJECTIVES STILL LIE WELL AHEAD OF THEM. THESE ARE KOLWEZI AND THE RAILROAD LINE LINKING THE COPPER AREA WITH THE REST OF ZAIRE.

8. GOB DOES NOT KNOW WHAT THE INVADING FORCES CONSIST OF, HOW THEY ARE ARMED AND HOW MANY THEY ARE. IT HAS NO INDEPENDENT CONFIRMATION OF VARIOUS REPORTS, MANY CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 BRUSSE 02693 182031Z

CONFLICTING, REGARDING MATERIAL AVAILABLE TO THE INVADERS OR FOREIGN CADRES WITH THEM. NEVERTHELESS, GOB CONCLUDES THAT THE PERFORMANCE OF THE INVADERS SO FAR WOULD HAVE BEEN BEYOND THE CAPABILITIES OF KATANGA GENDARMES ALONE WITHOUT SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE FROM ANGOLAN RESOURCES (NO DOUBT CUBANS).

9. ON BALANCE, THEN, GOB CALLS THE SITUATION IN SHABA "SERIOUS" WHILE NOTING THAT THE DEGREE OF SERIOUSNESS CAN ONLY BE DETERMINED WHEN ZAIRIAN FORCES COME TO GRIPS WITH THE ADVERSARY. BRUSSELS WILL LAY EMPHASIS ON ASSISTING A DIPLOMATIC RESOLUTION OF THE SITUATION AND DOES NOT CONTEMPLATE ADDITIONAL MILITARY ASSISTANCE.RENNER

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